

**COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO**

**ECOWAS COMMISSION**



**COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO**

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON AGRICULTURE SYSTEMS AT RISK: PRIORITY ACTION TOWARDS  
CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN WEST AFRICA. Accra, Ghana 4-5 Feb. 2013**

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**Key note remark by Dr. Marc Lapodini ATOUGA, ECOWAS  
Commissioner in charge of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources**  
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- Excellency the Minister of Environment, Science and Technology of the Republic of Ghana,
- Honorable Representative of FAO,
- Honorable Representative of Swedish Cooperation,
- The Representative of the Executive Secretary of CILSS,
- Representatives of Partners,
- Dear Experts,
- Distinguished Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

I have great pleasure today to take the floor at this High-level meeting initiated by FAO in the framework of her project adaptation on climate change, in order to discuss the impact of climate change on agriculture in West Africa region.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Ghana and particularly to the Hon Minister for the Environment who accepted to host this meeting and to provide facilities for it's organization.

I would also like to welcome all participants to Accra for this important event which I am sure will be a great starting point to work together to build the resilience of agriculture to climate change of our region.

Allow me, Hon Minister, to convey to all participants the warm greetings of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Amb. Désiré Kadré Ouédraogo.

- **Hon. Minister,**
- **Dear participants,**

Our region consists mainly of developing countries and is characterized by an unprecedented economic crisis situation, compounded by natural disasters seriously endangering the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the promotion of sustainable development in many key sectors.

One of the key areas most affected is agriculture which still plays an important role in the economic and social development of the Economic Community of West Africa States.

As you are aware, Agriculture remains the economic base of the region for jobs creation, income and especially for achieving food security. It contributes about 35% of GDP and employs about 60% of the workforce.

The export of agricultural products represents approximately 16% of total exports of goods and services in the region, while 80% of the needs in food of the region are achieved by local production.

- **Ladies and gentlemen**
- **Dear participants**

In West Africa, the problem of the long-term viability of extensive agriculture dependent predominantly on rain-fed agriculture, is unsustainable. This challenge of water resources availability is a fact which is gradually getting worse with the challenge of climate variability in our region.

In that context, we need to ask ourselves questions about the types of agriculture and livestock, types of surface impoundments, habitat type and consumer mode to consider in the practical ways of meeting the food needs of today's estimated population of about 290 million, estimated to reach 400 million by 2020 and 500 million in 2030.

To achieve that, it is imperative to maintain the role and importance of agriculture in the economy of the region and to assure food security for the population. That is why the Heads of States of ECOWAS adopted in 2005 Agriculture Policy for the region.

Among the six priority areas established by the agriculture policy, one is on the prevention and management of food crises and other natural disasters, including climate change. It involves developing strategies to cope with climate change and ensuring resilience in key development sectors.

Indeed the development of the Strategic Programme for the Reduction of Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change in West Africa adopted by the Ministers responsible for Environment in ECOWAS on 18 March 2010 showed that one of the sectors most vulnerable to climate change remains agriculture. This situation is even more apparent in recent decades by the persistence of several calamities, including:

- Floods that are sources of destruction of crops and climate refugees;
- Recurrent droughts, famine and sources of food insecurity;
- Climate change which is already having a very negative impact on the socio-economic lives of the people.

While some of these phenomena cannot be avoided, they can be prevented or the severity of their impacts mitigated, at least to preserve and promote development of our region.

**Madam Minister**  
**Dear participants,**

It's for this reason that the Regional Partnership Compact for the implementation of ECOWAP / CAADP stressed the urgent implementation of the second program of the PRIA/RAIP on promoting an overall environment conducive to the development of agriculture in the region; to consider adaptation to climate variability and climate change as an essential component for sustainable agriculture.

The ECOWAS Commission cannot but welcome the holding of this meeting on the adaptation of the agricultural sector in our region to climate change.

Indeed, it is hoped that after this meeting, in-depth discussions will be devoted to key areas to cope with and minimize risks related to agriculture systems, namely:

- Strengthening the area of agricultural research;
  - Capacity building in the management of natural resources;
  - The establishment of insurance on climatic and environmental risks;
  - Taking measures to accelerate the implementation of structural food security promoted through national agricultural investment and food security (NAIP-FS) and the regional agricultural investment programme(RAIP);
  - The promotion of better coordination of actions for the prevention and management of food crises.
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- **Your Excellency;**
  - **Dear development partners**
  - **Ladies and gentlemen**
  - **Dear participants**

The ECOWAS Commission, welcomed the good cooperation with the Swedish Cooperation (SIDA), which since 2010 has been committed to supporting the implementation of ECOWAS Strategic Programme for the Reduction of Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change in West Africa. This is mainly reflected in the preparation of the initial activities of the project which amounts to \$15,214,500 USD.

ECOWAS Commission would like to thank again Swedish Cooperation (SIDA) who is about to finance a large part of this strategy and hope that the conclusion of the agreement will be reached shortly.

This project includes among others, a component devoted to the integration of climate change aspects into policies, strategies and programs as well as pilot actions that will allow the Commission to consider, along with other organizations in our region, the adaptation of agriculture to climate change through the RAIP and NAIP.

ECOWAS Commission urges all of our partners to identify themselves with and support the implementation of the regional strategic program through these initial project activities. ECOWAS Commission requests also from partners to technically assist the Commission and help in the coordination of the overall implementation of the

program because some activities are already running through the initiatives of different actors and partners in the region.

The ECOWAS Commission relies on the cooperation of all partners to support the implementation of the recommendations and outcomes of this meeting.

With those remarks, I wish you a successful meeting and thank you all for your attention.